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BETTER PLANTS
By FARR



BETTER PLANTS

God's first gift to man was a Beautiful Garden



VOLUME I

NOVEMBER—DECEMBER, 1923

NUMBER 8



When the flowers of summer are asleep under their blanket of snow, the Christmas Tree is the quest of those who haunt the open fields and woodlands. Then, with holly and mistletoe and poinsettias, the faded colors of June become the brilliant scarlets and greens of December.

Protecting Plants for Winter

In their native habitat, plants are protected by nature. Moving them to the comparatively artificial environments of the home-grounds demands that human thought and hands compensate any lack of favorable natural conditions.

We must compensate for the diminishing of forest birds by spraying; for the lack of forest compost by watering; and for the lack of natural windbreaks and falling leaves by various methods of winter protection.

This is the period when winter protection is the chief garden activity. The exact period varies with latitude but the methods as set forth in this article are applicable wherever winter protection is necessary.

The subject can be simplified by classification as follows: mulching, wrapping, shading, and shielding.

Mulching

Mulching consists of applying a ground-cover of leaves, straw, manure, branches, or soil around the trunk or stem of trees, shrubs, or perennials.

The purpose of mulching is not to keep the plants warm, but to insulate the soil about the roots from quick changes in temperature. Another purpose of mulching is to reduce evaporation. Water well and cultivate before freezing weather sets in. Never let the ground freeze dry.

A mild, but erratic, winter causes more winter-killing than the most severe but constant, period of cold weather. Many

of the plants that have winter-killed in this locality are being successfully grown by our Canadian and Alaskan customers. This is because our winters consist of alternately cold and warm periods, or of thawing days and freezing nights, while in Canada and Alaska winter comes to stay in full force until spring.

Mulching is absolutely necessary for plants which have not become solidly established or which are not entirely native to their environment.

Materials: Hay, straw, leaves, fodder, manure, branches, and ground.

Time of Application: Only after the ground is permanently frozen and then promptly. Premature mulching may cause fall sap activity with fatal results.

Method of Application: Use light material for light perennials: 2 to 3 inches of mulch on top of a thin layer of branches and sticks is safe practice. Mulching only between or around the perennials is also a good plan. On heavier or stronger plants the smothering nature of the mulch is not of so much concern as the danger of encouraging mice and other rodents, which are not yet in winter quarters, to nest in the mulch and later to girdle or destroy the plants—another reason why mulching should be done only after the ground is frozen.

Roses and other woody plants susceptible to winter-killing are protected by a mound of earth heaped around the base to a depth of 1 foot and a top layer of leaves after the ground is frozen.

Removal: Remove mulch only after the spring frosts and then keep the mulch handy for delayed frosts. Mulch used on trees and shrubs, peonies and heavy perennials should be worked into the soil adjacent to them.

Wrapping

(1) Wrapping is, of course, confined to the trees and shrubs. The purpose is mainly to discourage rodents. For this purpose use a collar of tar-paper bound by wire, about the height of the maximum snow-line and immersed into the ground for an inch or two.

(2) The trunks of newly planted shade trees should be wrapped with burlap to prevent sun-scald. Such trees should also be guyed with wire to prevent them from swaying with winter winds and loosening their trunk. Pieces of an old inner tube make good insulation against wire-cutting.

Shading and Shielding

Rhododendrons, laurels, azaleas, and other broad-leaved evergreens should be protected from the winter sun by evergreen boughs or burlap stretched over the stakes. A liberal supply of leaves should be piled around the roots; these should not be removed in spring, but left to rot and form humus. Never apply manure to plants of this character.

Philadelphia is about the northern limit for hybrid hydrangeas in the open; therefore, they are usually grown in tubs, and in the winter must be protected in a

frost-proof cellar. South of Philadelphia the plants are likely to stand the weather in the open, unless it is exceptionally severe.

Specimen boxwoods grown in tubs and used as porch decorations and for similar purposes, should also be stored in a frost-proof cellar. This statement does not apply to specimens planted in the open ground, which may be protected by evergreen boughs or burlap, if protection is needed.

Tender roses and all tea roses should be strawed up now to protect them from the cold. Putting earth around the bases of the plants helps shed water, and will serve to protect the lower part of the plant from damage.

CHRISTMAS GREENS

The old-fashioned Christmas greens were rosemary, ivy, and bay, but in the two thousand tons of wreathing and decorating material which it is estimated that we now use every year there is a much greater variety. Best loved of all is the glossy, red-berried holly. "Holm" was the old English name for it, and it is thought to be identical with the "green-wood tree" of British ballads and of Robin Hood fame. On our side of the Atlantic the American holly (*Ilex opaca*) is found from Maine, where it grows as a shrub, to North and South Carolina, where it lifts a symmetrical cone of dark, shining leaves set with scarlet berry clusters along a beautiful trunk of gray and silver to the height of 70 or 80 feet.

Delaware and Maryland are usually credited with furnishing the best grades of holly to Christmas markets, but their "Three X" brand, as seen after shipment to northern cities is not so finely berried as the Carolina holly, plentiful in the region around Asheville. In America there are three distinct grades of holly. Trees that stand on dry, barren hillsides, as a rule, are heavily laden with thick, knob-like clusters of berries, but their leaves are likely to be small, yellowish, and imperfect. Follow some little stream to a sheltered, sunny glade where a holly trunk gleams white, and there you will find leaves large, dark and perfect, with a thick scarlet fruitage lighting the shadows evenly all over the tree.

WHEN THE DOZEN RATE?

According to our catalogue, the ten or dozen rate is applicable only on five or more plants of any ONE variety—that is, five or more Festiva Maxima peonies, or five or more Phlox Loki, etc., are entitled to ten or dozen rates, but five *different* phlox, or five *different* peonies, etc., are *not* entitled to quantity rates.

It requires less proportionate office work, packing, and digging to fill an order for five plants in one variety than it does to fill an order for five plants in five varieties. This economy on quantity orders we are glad to share with our customers.

NOVEMBER GARDEN ACTIVITIES

I saw old autumn in the misty morn
Stand shadowless like silence listening
To silence, for no lonely bird would sing
Into his hollow ear from woods forlorn
Nor lowly hedge or solitary thorn:—
Shaking his languid lock all dewy bright
With tangled gossamer that fell by night
Pearling his coronet of golden corn.

Thomas Hood.

Perennials may be planted until the ground freezes.

Dig over vacant beds and leave as rough as possible.

Destroy all nests of caterpillars and other harmful insects now.

Much breaking of slender evergreens is caused by swaying in the wind. This can be overcome by tying.

Plant all spring-flowering bulbs as soon as possible—there's nothing to be won by delay and much may be lost.

Bulbs for indoor bloom should be forced in the dark for at least two weeks before bringing them into the light.

Standard roses are among the hardest garden subjects to protect; the stems should be laid down and covered with earth.

Clean up all refuse and cut off and burn all flower-stalks. Thoroughly sterilize the ground by an application of lime.

Give a little extra care to all house plants at this time. Sponge the foliage with soap solution and top-dress the soil with sheep-manure.

Plants in tubs, that have gradually died off, should be put into frost-proof pits or cellars. Do not prune them, as it will destroy the bloom.

Protect slightly foxgloves, sweet williams, yuccas, and other plants which remain more or less green all winter. They must not be covered completely.

Tender hydrangeas may be buried in soil to protect them, or empty barrels, minus the bottom and top, may be placed over them and covered with leaves.

Do not neglect to provide for those friends of the garden, our birds. Feeding-boxes may be placed where the birds will be out of the reach of cats.

Madonna lily, oriental poppy, etc., which grow at the top during mild spells in winter, can stand only a loose, light covering held in place with a few twigs. A heavy covering for such plants spells disaster.

Now is the time to make changes in the garden before the ground freezes, in order to prevent settling and other irregularities in spring. Plants disturbed now are more likely to live than those moved in mid-winter.

Gather up the stakes and put them away for another season. Get the mulching material to some convenient place and apply it after the ground freezes. Its purpose is to protect from the sun, not from cold.



Farr Better Labels

are made of aluminum, with the name of the plant permanently stamped on the label. The rod is Number 9 gauge galvanized wire. The little "kink" in the rod prevents turning when pushed in the soil. The upper portion of the rod is bent at an angle of about 45 degrees, thus permitting the label to be easily read. These labels will give a correct check on varieties and help you to keep accurate garden records.

Small labels, two inches wide, with wire standard 1 foot long

Each	
Less than 5 labels.....	\$0 30
5 to 24 labels.....	25
25 to 99 labels.....	20
100 labels or more.....	18

Medium sized labels, two inches wide, with 2-foot wire standard

Each	
Less than 5 labels.....	\$0 35
5 to 24 labels.....	30
25 to 99 labels.....	25
100 labels or more.....	22

These prices include proper stamping of variety name. Send us the names of your garden pets—we can make up the labels quickly and forward them so that they will be ready in advance of the blooming season.

SHRUB PLANTING, CULTURE AND PRUNING

When.—Shrubs can be planted either in spring before starting into growth, or in the fall after they are dormant until the ground freezes permanently.

Where.—In any rich, well-drained soil, bearing in mind that the less hardy varieties should be planted in protected locations.

How.—Plant deeply enough so that the roots are entirely covered. A good rule is to plant at nursery-row depth as denoted by the ground marking. Spread the roots laterally when planting and pack the ground well around the roots.

Culture.—Give the shrubs ample room, as some varieties are of rapid growth. Keep them cultivated and free from weeds. During the first season and during hot weather supply the plants with plenty of water. Keep a sharp watch for scale and other parasites. Spray frequently. Use Niagara Dusts as recommended on inside back cover of "Better Plants—By Farr."

Pruning.—Early spring flowering shrubs should be pruned immediately after the flowering season. Late or summer flowering shrubs are best pruned during late fall or winter months. Pruning at other periods will prevent blooming. Read some reliable articles or books on pruning. Henry Disston & Sons, Inc., of Philadelphia, issue a valuable book on pruning, which you may get for the asking.



HERE'S A PAGE FOR EVERYBODY

Please just duplicate my order this fall, as usual, for narcissi, Darwin and Breeder tulips, etc., and in addition I would like at least three dozen pretty bedding hyacinths of assorted colors.

I wish you could have seen my peonies, iris, roses, etc., (that I have gotten from you) in bloom this spring; you would have been proud of them. The tulips hardly had a fair chance in comparison.

MRS. EDGAR HACKNEY, *Uniontown, Pa.*

[We remember that Mrs. Hackney has practically "duplicated" her bulb order for at least the past seven years. We say "practically" because each year it has been increased.]

Can you tell me what to do for my hybrid delphiniums which turn black on the bud clusters, and on which the leaves become moldy and of a disagreeable odor; the leaves also curl up. I can find no insect trouble and have limed the ground around them. Have cut them back severely and am most anxious to save several dozen big plants.

My Farr's irises are a source of great pleasure, having given us hundreds of blooms this summer.

MRS. WM. K. FERGUSON, *Algona, Iowa*

All delphiniums are subject to a fungous disease which attacks the roots of strong plants in bloom, causing them suddenly to wilt and die. To check this disease we recommend a mixture of equal parts of hydrated lime, flowers of sulphur, tobacco dust, and water, poured around the roots.

Delphiniums thrive best in a sandy loam, deeply worked and well drained. Most growers recommend an abundance of manure, but we believe great care should be exercised in the use of fresh stable manure as we are of the opinion that it causes the fungous diseases referred to. Pulverized sheep-manure or bone-meal worked into the soil around the plants, a few inches away from the crown, will be safer and more effective.

We are glad that your irises are a source of great delight to you and take pleasure in sending you a copy of our latest catalogue. Yours for better plants,

C. K. GARNER, *Secretary*

I want more yellow tree peonies, not Lorraine, as I have two plants of that, but any others that I can get—Esperance and Mme. Henri. What have you, and what could you import for me, if you haven't them yourself? One comes single, but a coppery yellow that is lovely—Mme. Henri, I think. Will you write me at once what you can do for me. The tree peonies I got from you are lovely and much admired, and are growing well, most of them.

MRS. W. K. DUPONT, *Wilmington, Del.*

My Dear Mrs. DuPont:

I can appreciate your desire for more yellow tree peonies and wish there were many more varieties of them. In spite of their comparatively higher price we were obliged to omit tree peonies, and particularly yellow varieties, from the last catalogue "Better Plants by Farr."

Fortunately, our supply is developing right along in good shape and I can again offer the yellow tree peony Souvenir de Maxime Cornu.



LEGEND OF THE MISTLETOE

"The mistletoe bough," according to an old Scandinavian legend, was responsible for the death of Balder, the son of Odin, and the God of Eloquence and Poetry. Having informed his mother, Friga, that a dream had warned him of his imminent death she invoked all the powers of earth—fire, air, earth and water (including all animals and plants)—to come to his rescue. In the combats of the gods, therefore, he found himself uninjured.

But Loake, his deadly enemy, was determined to discover the secret of his invulnerability, and by judiciously flattering Friga, and praising the prowess of her son, obtained from her the reason. She foolishly told him there was one feeble little shoot she had not thought it necessary to invoke—the mistletoe.

The treacherous Loake immediately procured a branch of the mistletoe, and entering the assembly of the gods presented an arrow made from it to blind Heda, with the words—"Balder is before thee. Shoot!" He shot and Balder fell, pierced and slain.

And countless thousands have since been "slain" and will be slain for ages to come with "darts" from "mistletoe bough."

BETTER BULBS

I purchased about 200 tulip bulbs of you last September and this spring they have been the talk of the town. Also I put out 25 peonies which are growing nicely and several of them will bloom this spring.

I enjoy so much the little paper, Better Plants by Farr. I predict it will be a great help in stimulating orders.

MRS. J. I. OWEN, *Stonington, Ills.*

I am afraid that our Federal Horticultural Board stands in the way of importing more tree peonies for you. We are still allowed to import, but only in a limited way, and must hold all imported plants in our nursery for a three- to five-year inspection period before resale. During the last three years we have imported such desirable things as *Viburnum Carlesii*, *Pæonia officinalis* types, Japanese tree peonies, and scarce herbaceous peonies in general. The first releases will be announced next spring.

Tree peonies will be ready for shipment when dormant, dependent on weather conditions. I shall be glad to reserve the Souvenir de Maxime Cornu now and to ship them to you at the very earliest planting time.

Very truly yours,
BERTRAND H. FARR, *President*

SUNRISE COLLECTION No. 2

Better Bulbs . . by Farr

25 Narcissi, assorted varieties . .	\$2 75
75 Single Early Tulips, assorted . .	2 50
75 Darwin Tulips, assorted	2 50
75 Breeder Tulips, assorted	2 50
25 Hyacinths, assorted	3 50

\$13 75

Any one collection at the price indicated. No discount applicable.

Complete Sunrise Collection No. 2,
275 bulbs, for only \$12.

Send your order now—you need not pay until you receive the bulbs.

Better Collections by Farr—for Spring Blooms

PHILADELPHUS VIRGINAL

A limited number of this superb flowering shrub are offered for sale this fall. They can be shipped this month or early next spring, as you desire. The price is \$2 each. For further description see my general catalogue, or page 6 of the September issue of BETTER PLANTS.

BARGAIN LILAC COLLECTION

For \$5 cash I will furnish three French Lilacs in three varieties, my selection.

For \$10 cash I will furnish six French Lilacs in six varieties, my selection.

For \$20 cash I will furnish twelve French Lilacs in twelve varieties, my selection.

Odd quantities, my selection, at an equal rate of \$1.67 per plant. The average price of Lilacs listed in my catalogue is over \$2.50.

These Lilacs are offered on the "cash with order" basis. 100 collections have been reserved. Offer expires November.

Please send cash with your order.

SPECIAL AUTUMN BARGAINS

	100	1,000
Poppy, Cerise Beauty	\$18 00	\$150 00
Veronica longifolia subsessilis	12 00	100 00
Heliopsis Pitcheriana	12 00	100 00
Gaillardia	12 00	100 00
Anthemis tinctoria Kelwayi	12 00	100 00
Hemerocallis Kwanso flore-pleno	12 00	100 00
ochroleuca	12 00	100 00
Symphoricarpos vulgaris. 2 to 3 ft.	25 00	200 00

At these rates not less than 25 plants will be sold. Twenty-five plants or more at the 100 rate, 250 plants or more at the 1,000 rate.

Our landscape department is always open to you and we want you to feel free to write and ask any questions on troubles concerning your garden.

MASTERPIECE COLLECTION

When you know Irises as "June companions" they reveal their delicate, ethereal loveliness, and lead you into a wonderland of delight. Wouldn't you like to adopt them as a "hobby," just as I did many years ago?

	Each
Cecile Minturn	\$5 00
Sea Gull	3 00
Seminole	2 50
Japanesque	3 00

Complete set (amounting to \$13.50) for \$12.00



Four Masterpieces Described

Cecile Minturn. Standards and falls a uniform shade of cattleya-rose; light beard. A large dome-shaped flower and a distinct improvement in the pink Irises. Height 2 feet. \$5.00 each.

Sea Gull. Standards white, dome-shaped; falls white faintly shaded blue and netted with narrow blue lines or veins. A large and unusual flower which is appropriately named. Height 2 feet. \$3.00 each.

Seminole. One of the richest colored varieties. Standards soft violet-rose; falls rich velvety crimson; brilliant orange beard. Blooms exceptionally large, dome-shaped; equally effective variety for specimen or mass planting because of its free-blooming character; medium height and strong grower. Honorable mention by the American Iris Society, June, 1920, and rates 8.3. \$2.50 each.

Japanesque. A distinct departure from

the German type. Six petals spread horizontally in the form of a Japanese Iris, giving the flower the effect of having six falls without standards. The standards are lavender-white flecked lilac; falls deep violet edged with pale lavender; coppery yellow beard. In many blooms the standards are marked like the falls. \$3.00 each.

NIAGARA HAND-DUST GUN

The Niagara Hand-Dust Gun is a "machine gun" for plant enemies. Three to six times as fast as spraying. More economical in use and result.



For all garden vines, shrubbery and perennials. Price \$3.50, including 1 pound of All-In-One Dust and a copy of "Instructions for Exterminating Garden Pests," a 40-page book.

All-In-One Dust is effective for scales, sucking insects, mildew, blight and chewing insects.

Sounds like a "cure all" but money back if unsatisfactory at any time.

A LILY LEGEND

During the tragic hours in Gethsemane, all the flowers in that garden bent their heads in sympathy and sorrow.

The red lily, however, in serene contemplation of her own beauty, elected to remain upright so that Christ would find comfort in her loveliness and fragrance.

In the moonlight, as Christ paused and went on, the lily observed his humility and contrasting her own self-satisfaction was overcome with a red flush and a droop, which are retained to this day.

Bertrand H. Farr—Wyomissing Nurseries Company
1250 Garfield Avenue, Wyomissing, Penna.

DECEMBER

In furry robes with wreath of holly
crowned,
Comes gay December smiling through
the snow;
Her arms with evergreens and mistletoe
Are filled; to her the white-encumbered
ground
Glistens a glad reception. All around
The trees with downy loads are bending
low;
The winds that o'er the frozen spaces
blow,
Come laden with the merry sleigh-bells'
sound.
The jolly skaters on the gleaming ice
Shout joyous greetings as she comes in
sight,
And rosy, happy children her entice
To join their wintry games with keen
delight.
December tarries, but the year's farewells
Haste her departure 'mid the tolling bells.
Donald A. Fraser.

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Wm. Therman

L C Corbett
Bureau of Plant Industry
U S Dept of Agriculture
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A Magazine Devoted to the Hardy Garden

